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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fifteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 25 March 2014 from the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-eighth session and has the honour to inform him the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has presented its candidature for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the period 2015-2017 at the elections to be held during the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly, in 2014.

Therefore, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, the Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands has the honour to attach herewith the voluntary pledges of the Kingdom of the Netherlands reaffirming its commitment to the promotion of and respect for all human rights and its active engagement in the future work of the Human Rights Council (see annex).

* A/69/50.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 25 March 2014 from the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of the Netherlands to the Human Rights Council, 2015-2017

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. The Kingdom of the Netherlands is proud to be candidate for a seat on the Human Rights Council for the period 2015-2017. The Kingdom strongly believes that promoting and protecting universal human rights contributes to a better world in which people live in dignity, equality and freedom. The Council, whose work should be based on mutual respect, engagement and dialogue, is an essential platform for discussing human rights issues. Through the voluntary pledges and commitments below, the Kingdom, should it be elected, will use its membership to further promote human rights at the national and international levels and within the Council.

Advancing the protection and promotion of human rights at the national level

2. The Netherlands will implement its recently adopted national action plan on human rights. The national action plan sets out the ways in which the Government fulfils its responsibility to protect and promote human rights at the national level. The plan revolves around five main focus areas:

(a) **Further improving the national human rights infrastructure**. This includes introducing legislative proposals to strengthen constitutional protection with respect to privacy of correspondence and telephone and telegraph communications, and the right to a fair and impartial trial; and aiming to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing And Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence;

(b) **Tackling discrimination**. The transfer of certain tasks from the central Government to the municipalities will strongly encourage the adoption of more comprehensive anti-discrimination policies by municipalities. Discrimination will further be tackled by reducing discrimination in the labour market, advancing equal opportunities for women and analysing the situation concerning children's rights in the Caribbean parts of the Netherlands;

(c) **Protecting privacy and personal data** at a time of rapid technological progress. For example, the Netherlands will expand the mandate of the Dutch Data Protection Authority to fine those who do not obey the laws;

(d) **Protecting the rights of those in aliens' detention**. The Netherlands will amend the law, introducing a separate administrative law framework for aliens' detention to make clear that such detention is not a punitive sanction;

(e) **Combating domestic violence, child abuse and trafficking in human beings**. This includes implementing the national action plan on tackling child abuse,

making municipalities responsible for all forms of child and youth support and protection, implementing the national action plan to prevent the abuse of elderly persons, the Dutch anti-trafficking task force's implementation of the national action plan against human trafficking, strengthening the chain approach to tackling forced marriage, and continuing our integrated approach to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.

3. The Netherlands has several independent institutions that help promote and protect human rights and deal with complaints, including the National Ombudsman the Children's Ombudsman and the Data Protection Authority. In 2012, the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights was established. It highlights, monitors, protects and promotes respect for human rights in practice, helps develop policy and legislation, and examines complaints of unequal treatment.

4. The Kingdom of the Netherlands strongly believes that a high level of national protection of human rights is well served by a willingness to engage in dialogue with partners and external supervisory bodies. The Kingdom will uphold its standing invitation to all special procedures.

5. The Kingdom will continue to cooperate fully with the United Nations human rights treaty bodies by meeting the deadlines for the submission of periodic reports and acting promptly and in good faith on concluding observations and recommendations.

Advancing the protection and promotion of human rights at the international level

6. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to strengthen its ties with other partners through bilateral and trilateral channels, preferably through cross-regional alliances. The Kingdom strongly believes that partnerships based on mutual trust and support offer scope for achieving great results in the area of promoting and protecting human rights.

7. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to remain an active player in the field of human rights, guided by its external human rights policy, which has been formulated in the policy strategy entitled "Justice and Respect for All".

8. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to continue to work for a life of human dignity for all.

Violence against women and girls

9. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to continue its efforts, together with key stakeholders, to combat impunity, support survivors and prevent future violations, so as to end gender-based violence. The Kingdom will actively advocate the elimination of violence against women and girls by introducing and supporting resolutions and organizing side events where possible. The Kingdom, together with France, will continue to introduce the biennial resolution entitled "Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women" in the Third Committee of the General Assembly, and will strive to ensure broad-based support for it.

Labour

10. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to promote decent working conditions and to continue the fight against child labour, for example, through the Child Labour Platform and by actively promoting the universal ratification and implementation of the fundamental Conventions of the International Labour Organization, including the eradication of child labour. The Kingdom will continue to combat human trafficking through increased cooperation with victims' countries of origin and by seeking to offer potential victims the best possible protection.

Business and human rights

11. The Kingdom will actively promote the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights through its embassies and trade missions and within the framework of the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights. The Netherlands has also adopted a national action plan on business and human rights, and pledges to implement it. The Kingdom will urge businesses to take responsibility for human rights issues in accordance with the Guiding Principles and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Guidelines.

Basic human needs: the right to water, sanitation and food

12. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to continue its efforts to promote and ensure observance of the right to water and sanitation, within and outside the United Nations, and to share its knowledge and expertise with partners at the United Nations. The Netherlands is committed to providing access to safe drinking water and sanitation to 25 million people in more than 15 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, working through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other programmes. Water and food security worldwide are a top priority within the Kingdom's development policy, and the Kingdom will continue its efforts on these matters worldwide, including through the group of friends on food and nutrition in New York, of which it is a founding member. The Kingdom advocates a human-rights-based approach to the post-2015 development agenda, linking human rights and development issues such as food security and water.

13. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to uphold the principles of equality and non-discrimination for all.

Equality and non-discrimination

14. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to uphold equality and to combat all forms of discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion and gender identity or sexual orientation, by raising awareness on these issues, supporting initiatives, providing training, supporting capacity-building and organizing events where possible. The Kingdom will also work to improve the rights of disabled persons, and pledges to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities no later than 2015.

Gender equality and women's rights

15. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to continue its international cooperation efforts to increase the political, social and economic participation of women and to promote gender equality and women's rights worldwide. The

Netherlands was one of the first States to adopt a national action plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), with a focus on equal political participation and female leadership as key elements in restoring stability after violent conflict. The Kingdom will organize an international conference to draw international attention to this topic. The Kingdom worked with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and Syrian women to ensure greater involvement of women in the Syria peace process in Geneva, an example of our commitment to promoting women's rights in practice. The Kingdom also aspires to a world in which sexual and reproductive health and rights are respected, and has appointed a Special Ambassador on sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV/AIDS.

16. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to ensure the promotion and protection of fundamental freedoms.

Freedom of religion and belief

17. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to uphold an inclusive approach to human rights, without excluding people from any religious or other group, and to continue its support for freedom of religion and belief. Through its Human Rights Fund, the Kingdom supports organizations that promote freedom of religion and belief. The Kingdom has introduced several resolutions in multilateral forums to promote freedom of religion and belief, and supports input by faith-based organizations.

Freedom of expression online and offline

18. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to further promote freedom of expression online and offline as a fundamental freedom for all. The Kingdom was a co-founder of the Freedom Online Coalition, aimed at facilitating a global dialogue about Governments' responsibility for furthering Internet freedom. The Kingdom and its partners in the Coalition have set up the Digital Defenders Partnership, a fund to support projects that help keep the Internet open and free from emerging threats, specifically in repressive and transitional environments.

Human rights defenders

19. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to continue to support human rights defenders both financially and politically. The Kingdom supports the participation and involvement of human rights defenders and organizations in the work of the Council. Through its Shelter City initiative, it also offers temporary respite (for periods of three months) for human rights defenders under pressure. This initiative was launched in The Hague in 2012. The Kingdom now seeks to include other cities and is promoting the spread of the Shelter City initiative beyond the Netherlands.

20. The Netherlands actively contributes to shaping and implementing the European Union's Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, and will continue to do so.

21. The Kingdom will continue to support innovative human rights projects through the Human Rights Fund, as well as through various human rights awards, including the Human Rights Tulip for human rights defenders who work in innovative ways.

Advancing the protection and promotion of human rights within the Human Rights Council, working on the basis of mutual respect and engagement

22. Both as a former Council member and as an observer State, the Kingdom has actively supported the observance of all human rights in the Council, ranging from economic, social and cultural rights to civil and political rights. Guided by its external human rights policy, the Kingdom will remain an active promoter of human rights in the Council.

23. The Kingdom of the Netherlands pledges to use its Council membership to respond effectively and rapidly to urgent human rights situations worldwide. The Kingdom believes that the Council should respond in a timely manner where needed, and supports special procedures and mechanisms such as commissions of inquiry, which advise the Council on the gravity of a given situation.

24. The Kingdom will continue to initiate discussion in the Council and action on country situations and broad themes such as children's rights, violence against women and discrimination.

25. To ensure the promotion and protection of human rights, the Kingdom will continue to actively participate in all relevant multilateral forums, such as the Third Committee of the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women and the International Conference on Population and Development.

26. The Kingdom pledges to continue its efforts to promote human rights through United Nations specialized agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to which the Kingdom is a leading donor.

27. The Kingdom attaches great importance to hearing a wide range of voices in the Council. To this end, it supported the establishment of the OHCHR voluntary trust fund to promote the participation of small island developing States and least developed countries in the Council. The Kingdom also advocates an active role for civil society organizations in the United Nations human rights institutions.

28. The Kingdom of the Netherlands reaffirms its continued support for the universal periodic review mechanism. This mechanism has proved to be a successful tool for the promotion and protection of human rights. The Kingdom will continue to actively participate in the universal periodic review process.